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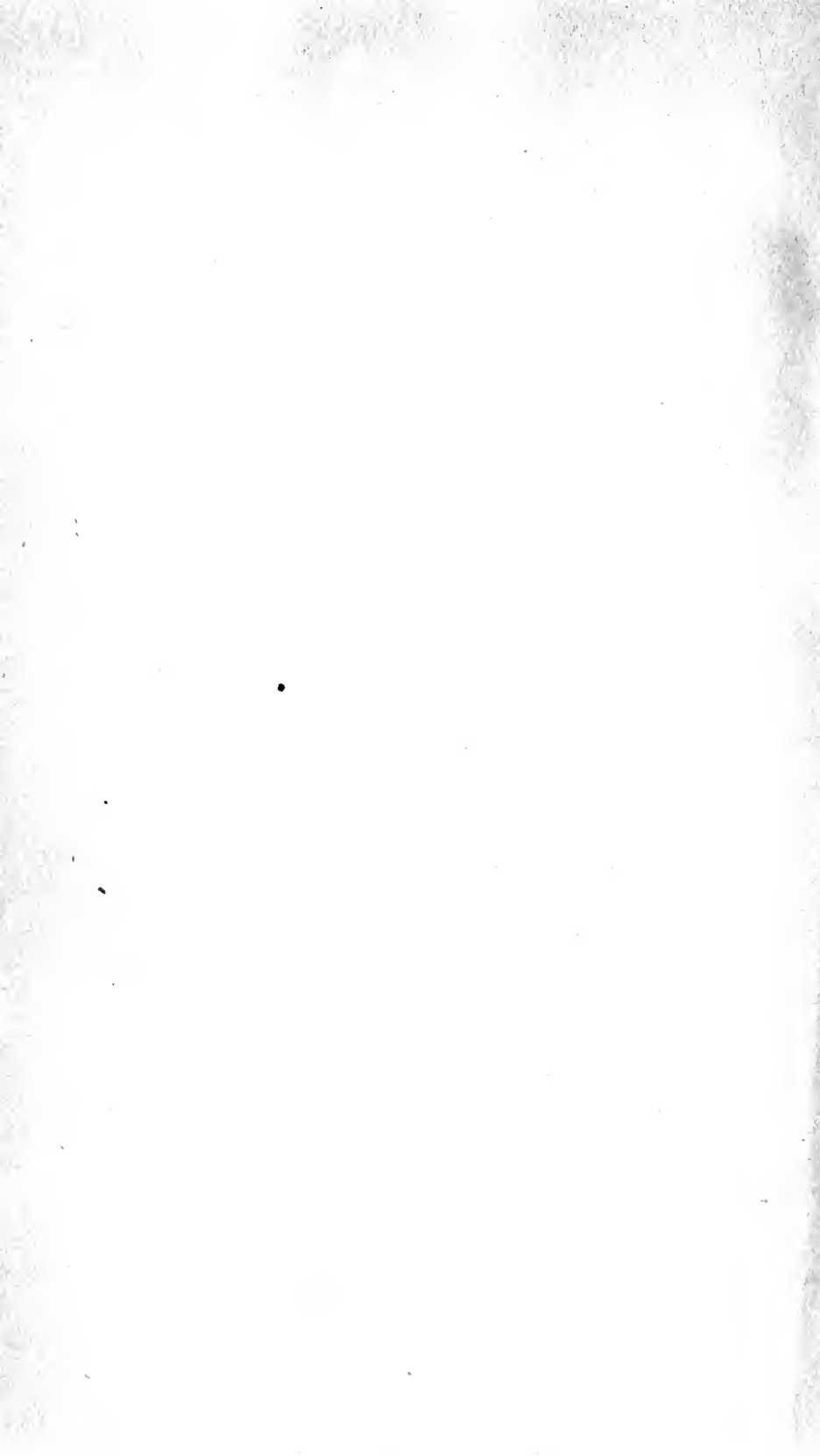


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MEMORIES OF  
EARLY DAYS IN BUFFALO

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By SYLVESTER J. MATHEWS





## MEMORIES OF EARLY DAYS IN BUFFALO

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By SYLVESTER J. MATHEWS<sup>1</sup>

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Buffalo in 1838 was a city of "magnificent(?) distances." The speculative bubbles that had been blown during the previous decade had been bursted as in a single night by the panic of '37. Building enterprises of every kind were at a standstill, real estate in great quantities had been thrown into chancery and much more tied up in various ways of litigation, rendering it unavailable for new enterprises that subsequently started up in the '40's, and in some instances even into the '50's.

Vast tracts of land within the city limits were held by Eastern capitalists for speculation. Notable among them

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1. The author of these reminiscences was born in Auburn, N. Y., where he is now residing, in hale old age. In response to a request from the editor of this volume, for facts about himself, Mr. Mathews writes that after removal, with his father's family, to Utica in 1833, and to Ithaca in 1835, he came to Buffalo in 1837. Here he was "a little Sunday-school scholar in the Old First Presbyterian Church basement Sunday-school room, with entrance on Pearl street." "The old-time Sunday-school picnics to the old Indian Mission Church of the Senecas, four miles away, were great events in our youthful days. Later I was a pupil of Dr. Chambers' private school in the basement of the Unitarian Church, corner of Franklin and Eagle streets." He recalls his schoolmates, among them Julia Dean, the actress. He was fond of sketching, and used to make excursions with "Al" (the Rev. Albert) Bigelow "on the old Black Rock horse-ferry boat to Fort Erie for sketches of the picturesque ruins. He remembers the steamboat *Caroline*, and many stirring episodes of the Patriot War of '37-'8. He was for a time in the employ of Hall & Mooney, printers and lithographers, and during the period about which most of his reminiscences cluster, he lived at the corner of Court and Pearl streets.

was that strip of barren plain of a quarter of a mile and over in width that extended for a mile and a half east from near Niagara street and away over the Cheektowaga town line. Washington, Ellicott, Oak, Elm, Michigan and other streets north from Genesee street, which crossed this young Siberia on paper, without even a fence, tree or house to mark their passage across were left unimproved until late in the '40's, excepting their continuations over the hill north across High, North, Goodrich and other streets in the Cold Spring district.

Consequently the march of improvement came not from the old center and spreading out into the suburbs, but it came rolling in down Niagara street at the north from "over the hills from the poor-house" in Black Rock, down Main from the country seats of Cold Spring, up Genesee from the plains of Cheektowaga in the east, up Batavia (now Broadway), from the Prussian settlements beyond the hemlock woods, up Swan and Seneca, from the Hydraulics, and across the flats from Bidwell & Banta's shipyards in the south.

Along the docks the commercial spirit was as buoyant as ever, for the long heads then in possession were conscious of the fact that they held the keys of the "Gate City" of the Lakes, and were putting their houses, boats and docks in order for the fast-incoming tide of emigration that was to seek an entrance through Buffalo to the great Northwest.

The all-the-year-round business of Buffalo was at that time mostly done on Main street, between the canal bridge, just below the Mansion House, and up to Genesee street in fronts that are now covered by about 400 numbers. Between the canal and harbor were the wholesale dealers, storage and forwarders, lumber yards, boiler shops, foundries, machine shops, soap and candle factories, ship

chandlery and sail lofts, sailor boarding-houses, boat repairing shops, etc.

Architecturally speaking, the style of buildings at that period was somewhat mixed. Beginning with the old red warehouse at the foot of Main street, on which was painted in big white letters "E. W. Munger, Ship Chandlery, Storage and Forwarding," and passing up were to be noted some very loud examples of old-time boss carpenters' designing. Across the street, at the junction of Ohio street, was a block of three-story brick buildings, extending up to Washington street, with a frontage on the dock and also on Ohio street, which went by the name of Ohio Buildings, in which was a little of everything. On the opposite corner was a jumble of one and two-story wood buildings on the site of which was subsequently erected the Commercial Hotel.<sup>1</sup> A little further up to the left George B. Walbridge & Co. had lately erected a fine large four-story lemon-colored front, wholesale grocery house and were doing the big grocery business of the town. This building was burned one night during the late '40's, when young Calvin Bishop, one of the clerks sleeping there, lost his life. All that was ever found of him, after a search of nearly a week, was a small charred mass containing his heart.

Just above the Walbridge store was the cream-colored front, two-story brick hotel, the Ohio House, with an immense burnished tin-top dome, large enough for a good-sized capitol building—presumably planned to hold all the guests at one time and give them a good view of the lake. Its usefulness as a point of observation was brought to an end by the erection of the lofty walls of the Walbridge building.

1. See Publications, Buf. Hist. Soc'y, Vol. XVI, p. 55, for a picture of this hotel. Several other old-time buildings mentioned by Mr. Mathews are illustrated in that volume.

Old lake men used to say that when coming down the lake on a clear day, the first object sighted in Buffalo was the old hotel dome, glistening like a huge diamond, 20 miles away.

At the east side of Main street at the corner of Perry street stood a little white tavern with no name and apparently no proprietor, but always doing a big three-cent bar trade. On the opposite corner commenced that monotonous stretch of four-story brick fronts of 22 stores, called the "Webster Block," that had lately been erected. In about the middle of the block, projected from over the eaves a mammoth gold anvil, swinging and glistening in the sun, a conspicuous object from far up Main. "Thompson Bros.' Wholesale Hardware," was the legend.

#### STEAMBOAT ART.

Two or three doors above, covering two windows of the second story, was a huge framed oil painting of the new and splendid steamboat Buffalo rounding the light-house pier with colors flying, and plowing through the little white-caps like a duck; it made a very breezy and attractive picture. Accompanying signs showed that here the Miller Brothers held forth with their paraphernalia for "House, sign, ornamental and steamboat painting," and stained glass work in great variety. These Millers were artists or artistically inclined artisans, especially I. C., whose "sig." as "del." appeared upon nearly all the lithographs of Hall & Mooney's handsome steamboat plates (every crack boat in those days had a cut of its own, for posters), and occasionally on the fine wood cuts with J. W. Orr, and later Richardson as "Eng." which made them famous, they being eventually gathered into citizenship by New-Yorkers, who appreciated Buffalo fine-art work. The Millers, however,

were "in to stay." The rivalry among steamboat men and the inauguration of lavish display in cabin ornamental work by the Reed line of steamers soon "had 'em all in for it," and nearly every steamer of any pretensions built at other lake ports had to be run down to Buffalo for the Millers to put on the finishing touches. Along in the '40's it was as good as a visit to a fine-art gallery to go through the cabins of the first-class steamers, of which some days there were five or six at a time in port.

The appropriateness of designs for the names of the steamers was observable in the burning prairie scenes for the Buffalo; Mississippi and Missouri views for the St. Louis; Rocky Mountain and Pacific coast views for the Oregon; Hudson-river scenery for the Hendrick Hudson; Oriental scenery for the Sutland, and old-time Indian and Dutch for the Albany; north European for the Baltic; Canadian lake, river, city and Indian for the Canada; Niagara Falls and river views for the Niagara; and so along, until the new era in railroads, which necessitated the conversion of our fleet of floating palaces into propellers, barques, barges, etc., and made a revolution in the style and finish for the new comers.

On the west side of Main street, near Lloyd, in a two-story wooden block, with a big oval black sign, with gold letters, set on top of a big square post in country-inn fashion, was our clerical-looking friend, William Madison, with white neckerchief and ruddy face, who, from early morn till late at night, was ready and willing to serve all who wished to patronize the only Temperance House then in Buffalo.

Across the way, between the north end of the Webster Block and the canal, was a two-story white tavern with quite a frontage, called Huff's Hotel, seemingly quite

liberally patronized, so much so as to warrant the building of a large brick four-story addition the following year. Landlord Huff was one of the pleasantest spoken of men, yet there was a peculiarity of speech which to many seemed to be a little Huffy.

On the west, beginning at the canal, was a long row of buildings extending around the corner into Commercial street, covering the site of what subsequently became Spaulding's Exchange. This locality during the '30's enjoyed the best all-the-year-round trade in the city. The variety of small stores attracted the boatmen and emigrants in the summer and farmers, boatbuilders and repairers in the winter.

On the corner of Main and Exchange streets was the old Mansion House, rightly named, for directly opposite, fronting on Exchange street, was the Le Couteulx mansion, a spacious brick house, embowered in the old-time regulation locust, sumach, lilac, snowball and thrifty peach and other fruit trees in great variety, in a well-laid-out garden, abounding with peonies, lilies, roses, honeysuckles, white strawberry beds, spearmint, summer savory, sage and other medicinal and culinary herbs, with vegetables in abundance and, in fact, most everything raised in an old-fashioned garden. The high retaining walls made necessary by the cutting down of Main, Exchange and Washington streets, with which it was bounded, made this a most conspicuous and attractive point for the eyes of the traveler and in a measure contributed to the popularity of the hotel, from the windows and three-story all-around piazzas of which the guests were wont to enjoy the view.

The landlord was the portly, genial embodiment of a man, Philip Dorsheimer, then the most influential man among our German citizens, and very popular with the best

classes of Buffalonians. Subsequently the old building was torn down and the present Mansion House, five stories at first, but now six, erected in its place.

#### THE OLD TERRACE MARKET.

Opposite, on the west side of Main street, was the grand opening, called The Terrace, upon which had lately been erected between Pearl and Commercial streets in conspicuous shape, quite a stately two-story brick market-house and city building, in the basement of which was the vegetable market stall, and in the Pearl-street end, the watch-house "lock-up coops." In those days there were no policemen and in times of disturbance it was "run down to the watch-house and get a constable," in the day-time, and in the night "call one of the watchmen off the street." They used to walk in pairs, wearing big leather fire hats with "City Watchman" painted on the fore-piece, and carried big canes or dog-killers and dark lanterns. Capt. Sam Fursman was the man who filled the position of what is now called chief of police.

On the first floor, approached by high wooden steps, down which more than one butcher, beef and all, came tumbling, were the meat stalls or market proper, where nearly all of the leading butchers had a stand. Overhead in the second story at the east end was the Common Council chamber, a rather commodious, high-ceiling room, in which presided as Mayor Hiram Pratt, then serving his first term of one year. In those days<sup>1</sup> mayors were elected for a year only. Theodotus Burwell was the City Attorney, T. C. Peters, City Clerk, and Oliver G. Steele, Superintendent of Common Schools. Several of the city officials had offices in the building, and in the north end was subsequently the

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1. 1838-'9.

city library. Rising from the center roof was a large square white tower like a cupola, on the top of which was placed during this year of Patriot troubles an alarm bell of silver tone, which rang out its peals of alarm one cold moonlight night and set in motion that mass of floodwood militia that had been called in from the surrounding towns and lay buried up under piles of hay and straw in the big blue "B. Rathbun Warehouse" on the Ship Canal Slip east of Erie street. Owing to mysterious movements of the British across the river, and the fact that the Patriots had taken possession of Navy Island, our military authorities, professing to believe that there was a probability of invasion, had summoned these men without providing for their proper quartering as they arrived in squads, companies and battalions, many without arms.

Hardly had the work of organization begun before the sound of distant cannonading started the rumor that the British were crossing. Then began that weird-like march down Niagara street. Men wrapped up in bed-blankets, horse blankets of all colors, quilts, buffalo robes and green baize by the yard, kept step to the tap of the heavy bass drum; the plaintive pealing of the solitary bell and distant booming of cannon made a night of scenes and sounds not easily forgotten by many yet living who passed through that eventful night. After arriving at Black Rock our militia found it to be a false alarm, caused by the British shelling the woods of Navy Island and the crossing of the Patriots to this side where they disbanded.

The open space around the market building was assigned to farmers' wagons, fish carts, poultry coops, Indian ponies, potato wagons, German cabbage carts, etc.

Finding ourselves at the corner of the Terrace and Main street we sniff the savory odor of roast clams, broiled



chicken, Welsh rarebits, etc., issuing from over the top of the lowered sash of the basement recess with wide descending steps that led you down into a room with a bar in front. Along the north side of the wall was a row of box stalls with blind doors, with a bench-like table and cushioned benches, roomy enough for four, and in a rush, or for a private party, six could squeeze in and be served at short notice with cooked-to-order dishes. There was the beginning of what for the next three decades flourished under the name of "Terrapin Lunch," a recess (so-called in those days), saloon and restaurant later, and finally Terrapin Dining-rooms. From the shores of the Kennebec to the Pacific has the name of this old feedery become famous, especially so with many an old soldier, for there was where they took their last social meal with some departed friend before going to the front.

#### BOAT-BUILDING ON THE CONJOCKETY.

Few of the old-time Buffalo boys who were wont to wander down Niagara street to lower Black Rock for a stroll and fish along the banks of the Scajaquada creek up to its crossing with Main street, above Cold Spring, can scarcely recognize the once rushing, wide-awake stream in the dammed sleepy waters of the miniature lake at the Park.

The fishing in those days in the old creek was remarkable for the uniformity of size of the perch that ran up from Black Rock harbor and were found in the deep holes along the banks of the creek. Being ready biters at the worm, a two-foot twig was often filled with fish in a short time.

In those days of few refrigerators many an "early catch" found an appreciative buyer (at one shilling a twig

of a dozen fat, crimson-fin perch), among the residents of upper Main, Pearl, Franklin and Delaware streets.

Here on the banks of this unpretentious little stream was fought the battle of Black Rock on and near the bridge at its mouth, where it emptied into Niagara river. Out of the ravine to the east, through which flowed the crystal waters, emerged, just before the battle, that famous surprise party—Capt. Jack Richardson's Cayuga-county riflemen, which gave the name erroneously as "Morgan's riflemen," to the hastily summoned crowd of militia with muskets and shot-guns.

These men from Auburn and Aurelius with their left-over tactics of '76 did the effective work of the day and caused the helter-skelter tumbling backwards into the British boats and a suspension of further efforts to making a landing for some time after.

Here on the banks of this then called Conjockety creek a part of Commodore Perry's fleet was fitted out under the superintendence of Henry Eckford, afterwards renowned at home and abroad as a naval constructor.

Here also in 1818 was built the first steamboat to sail the upper lakes, a low-pressure, 338-ton vessel, which was wrecked Nov. 1, 1821, near the foot of Michigan street.

The old shipyard soon after became one of the noted ship-building centers of the West, producing much of the shipping of the lakes, and, later, many of the primitive boats of the Erie Canal.

In 1825 two more steamboats were built, the Pioneer, high-pressure, 120 tons, and the Henry Clay, low-pressure, 300 tons. In 1826 was built the Niagara. In 1833 began the era of experimental steamboat building from original designs by amateur steamboat men, the accommodating proprietors of the yard simply suggesting "we've got the

yard and you've got the money; we'll build anything you order. Let's go ahead and have no two boats alike."

In this year they brought out the Daniel Webster, a low-pressure 358-ton vessel with the loftiest gallows frame ever before or since seen on a boat of her size. At the same time they built the far-famed nondescript called the New-York, a sight to behold and a noise to be heard. Think of a vessel of only 325 tons with two fully-developed high-pressure engines; two "regular snorters" of puff-pipes and four big black smoke-stacks; two fore and aft masts; two men and a relief man at the tiller; each engine and one wheel acting independently, the whole combination sailing away to the tune of "Swiftly Glides the Bonnie Boat," with the running gait of a clipped-wing chicken.

These two models of naval construction never had their record for speed broken except by the Charles Townsend, another low-pressure, 312-ton experimental failure, built at Buffalo in 1835, with her very wide, short, dumpy, gallows frame and three-abreast red smoke-stacks, with most excruciating appearance; and the United States (iron) revenue cutter Dallas, 370 tons, Capt. Ottinger commanding, built by the Government at Buffalo in 1846.

These two last-named vessels have been known with wind astern in still waters to make their four miles an hour!

After a checkered career of less than a decade the New-York and Daniel Webster were partially dismantled and towed down to Black Rock harbor and moored off Squaw Island near natal waters to spend their last days. During the decade between 1845-55, the village of Black Rock, with its long line of dilapidated stores and dwellings crowned with the old Breckenridge-church steeple and an occasional tall poplar high up along the banks, and the weather-beaten warehouses along shore, together with the score of played-

out steamboats owned at this end of the lake that had been towed down to rot in the waters of this immense marine boneyard, presented from the decks of passing river-boats, a most picturesque and decidedly antiquated appearance.

In continuation of the record of Black Rock-built steamers, was another boat for 1833, the very trim sailor Gov. Marcy, 161 tons, low-pressure engine. The Gen. Porter was added in 1834, low-pressure, 352 tons, very comely and fair of speed. In 1837, the keel of the last of the large boats to be built at this yard was laid, the very creditable and long-lived steamer New-England, low-pressure, 416 tons.

About these times the shipyard of Bidwell & Banta at Buffalo, having begun to reach mammoth proportions, the business at the old yard began to wane, and, with the exception of the Waterloo for the Niagara Falls route, a low-pressure boat of 98 tons in 1840; the little pleasure-steamer George W. Clinton, 19 tons, in 1842; and the Black Rock ferry-boat Union, high-pressure, 64 tons, in 1843, steam-boat building ended at Conjockety Creek.

#### THE REAL SHIPS OF THE LAKES.

It may be news to many of the lakers of today, but nevertheless it is a fact, that but two full-rigged ships from "stem to stern" ever sailed the waters of the great lakes above Niagara Falls.

There have been barques, three-masted vessels, square rigged in part, that were often mistaken for ships. But the first and nearest approach to a ship on these waters was the "big ship" of the British fleet at the Battle of Lake Erie, a 250-ton barque, called the Detroit, a very conspicuous object in the maneuvers of the British fleet.

This vessel along in the '40s was sold at Erie as condemned material and fell into the hands of a company who put aboard of her a bear, deer, wild cat, and other animals and towed her down the Chippewa to be sent over the falls, a drawing card for thousands who "went down to see." The old craft lodged above in the rapids and failed to go over until she broke up.<sup>1</sup>

The first ship of the fresh water seas was built at Buffalo in 1836 by Col. Alanson Palmer on a *carte blanche* order to build a 300-ton ship and make her as beautiful as money could do it and keep the name a secret, which was done until he broke a bottle of champagne over the bow with, "Ladies and gentlemen, I propose to call the gallant craft after my beloved wife, Julia Palmer," amid the booming of a cannon and the ringing of a score of steamboat bells along the docks.

And beautiful she was, the pride of old harbor-men as she used to round the light house pier with "Old Glory" in immense folds floating out behind her gaff with Julia's figurehead-bust gorgeously set in scrolls and cornucopia work on the bow.

The next was the ship Milwaukie of 400 tons, built at White Haven in 1837 and calculated more for service than for show.

These two ships after a couple of seasons were found not to pay, requiring too big crews for the amount of tonnage covered, and that the agile "fore and afters" were taking the wind out of all other kind of sailing craft even to the displacement of quite a fleet of brigs that had been put in commission. The subsequent steamers Julia Palmer

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1. The attempt to send the *Detroit* over Niagara Falls was on Sept. 15, 1841. See Publications, Buf. Hist. Soc'y, Vol. VIII, pp. 402-3, where the facts are given.

and Milwaukie were remodellings of these ships and wore themselves out at a profit to their owners.<sup>1</sup>

In the person of Alanson Palmer in his prime, Buffalo had a man that was leaven in almost any enterprise that he became interested in. Like A. T. Stewart he had a *penchant* for an assortment most novel in his holdings from the patent of the first successful cracker machine to a Point Abino wind mill. In the County Clerk's office the records show him to have been for a brief period the owner of the old American Hotel property, the finest of the period at that time in Western New York. He also had a second-hand church (the old Baptist) that he was concerned in the remodelling over into the high-stoop old postoffice building across the front of which appeared that big gilt sign, "O. H. Dibble, Post Office." He was a man of commanding presence and under the folds of a long, heavy black broad-cloth cloak as he passed by throwing to his right and the left his pleasant "good morning" or "good evening, sir," made his mark. He preferred to walk and talk in place of hide and ride in his gilded coach to and from his castelated mansion on Tupper near Main street. Perhaps for a decade or more, the name of the Buffalonian most frequently down on subscription papers for sums to make most pleasant reading, was that of Alanson Palmer.

#### HIRAM CHAMBERS, SCHOOLMASTER.

There are a few old-time residents who can stand in front of the City Hall and look diagonally across to the Eagle-street corner, bringing to view the familiar outlines of the fine cut-stone front and classical pediment of the old Unitarian Church (now the Austin building, No. 110

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1. Capt. E. P. Dorr, in his "History of Our Lake Commerce," says that the *Superior* was a ship, "altered from a steamer."

Franklin street), in the basement of which along in the late '30's and early '40's was a door adjoining the Sunday school room on the Eagle street side, on which was a little black tin sign bearing in lettered gilt the legend "Hiram Chambers, Select School."

Over the threshold of the aforesaid door passed, to take their seats in the spacious square room, some forty or more girls and boys of Niagara Square and adjacent streets. The girls when seated at their desks, faced the west wall, the boys the east wall, and the primary "kids" the north wall, the whole forming a hollow square in the center of which, in a revolving-seated arm-chair, sat (when not tipping around with cat-like tread in white stockings and morocco pumps, with a six-foot rattan in hand) the presiding genius.

Our most worthy tutor, the originator and sole manipulator of this institution, was a conspicuous figure on the street as he passed by with his ruffled shirt-bosom, Roman nose, rosy cheeks and laughing eyes, tapping the bricks with his ivory-headed Perry's Flagship timber-relic cane, presenting a most genteel walking "ad" for his profession, very taking, especially with prospective applicants for tuition.

At recess (a liberal twenty minutes) the boys betook themselves to the old burying-ground across the way, that occupied the whole block, now City Hall site, with the exception of the Franklin-street side which was built upon. Here with the standing admonition, "Don't play tag among the grave stones, nor run upon the walls" (substantially built of brick with broad stone copings), the use of the grounds for open-air recreation was tolerated.

Over on the west side, under an immense forest tree left standing by the early axmen, near the Delaware-street side,

was a long table-like tombstone which the embryo orators improvised as a rostrum, and were wont to declaim therefrom their "spreadeagleisms," and eulogies on our martyred heroes, one of whom lay beneath the marble slab that bore the following inscription:

"Here lies the body of *Major* WILLIAM HOWE  
CUYLER of Palmyra, N. Y., who was killed at Black  
Rock by a cannon ball from the enemy on the night of  
August 10th, 1812."

This was followed to a conclusion by many lines of eulogistic chiseling.

During the general disinterment of human remains in this cemetery along in the '50's this stone, and the remains of Major Cuyler, were taken to Palmyra, to rest with kindred dust after over thirty years of veneration among strangers.

Major Cuyler was principal aide to Major General Amos Hall, and was riding along the beach at full speed, carrying a lantern, engaged in procuring relief for the wounded, when he was struck by a round shot and instantly killed.<sup>1</sup>

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1. There are numerous accounts, some of them by eye-witnesses, of the death of this popular young officer. Gen. Asa Warren, whose reminiscences are printed in volume V of these Publications, says: "I saw [on the New York shore opposite the British batteries] . . . Major William Howe Cuyler, aide to Maj. Gen. Hall, commanding officer at Buffalo. At the sound of the firing he had mounted his horse and rode down the river with a lighted lantern in his hand, as I was told, and when in range of their guns was shot through the body, and his wrist was broken by grape shot. Thus fell the accomplished gentleman, the brave and valiant officer." A despatch dated "Canandaigua, Oct. 13, [1812]," giving details of the affair, said: "Among the killed, we lament to number Major Cuyler. . . . He was approaching the beach on horseback when a grape shot, from the British battery, cut off his hand, entered his abdomen and came out near the backbone. He instantly fell." Lossing states ("Field Book of the War of 1812") that "his body was carried by Capt. Benjamin Bidwell and others to the house of Nathaniel Sill." Among the many tributes to his memory, printed at the time, the following, reminiscent of Gray's "Elegy," appeared in the *War*, a newspaper published in New York by Samuel Woodworth (author of "The Old Oaken Bucket"), Nov. 21, 1812. It is here



He was buried with public honors, an oration being delivered by J. E. Chaplin, Esq. The affair seems to have created a deep impression upon the community, the *Buffalo Gazette* printing a part of Mr. Chaplin's oration.

The girls for their airing took a more conspicuous but ever pleasant spot, the high front stone steps of the church, with their elaborate and highly ornamental iron railings flanked with filigree lamp posts. Here, after school, for a quarter of an hour, both sexes would circle around that little queen, Miss Julia Dean, who lived around the corner (her father the then manager of the old Eagle-street Theater), and Mary Monteath, another magnet. Now Mary had a pack of cards, and the whole school used to go

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printed because it is the only poem known to have been inspired by the old Franklin Square burial ground. Mr. Mathews' narrative shows that, at a later date, his grave was marked with an inscribed stone:

TO THE MEMORY OF MAJ. CUYLER.

Born in the reach of splendor, pomp and power,  
He spurned at honors unattained by worth,  
And fostering freedom, in a glorious hour,  
Preferred her cause to all the pride of birth.

In Freedom's virtuous cause alert he rose,  
In Freedom's virtuous cause undaunted bled.  
He died for Freedom 'mid a host of foes,  
And found on Erie's beach an honor'd bed.

But where, Oh! where the hallow'd sod,  
Beneath whose verd the hero's ashes sleep?  
Is this the cold, neglected, mouldering clod,  
Or that the grave at which I ought to weep?

Why rises not some massy pillar high  
To grace a name that fought for Freedom's prize?  
Or why, at least, some rudely etch'd stone nigh,  
To show the spot where matchless valor lies?

Yet soldier, thy illustrious name is known,  
Thy fame supported and thy worth confess'd,  
That peerless virtue, which in danger shone,  
Is shining still, when thou art laid in rest.

And, though no monumental scrip is seen,  
Thy deeds to publish and thy worth proclaim,  
Each son of FREEDOM, passing near this green,  
Shall hail brave CUYLER, and revere his name.

D. B. V.

to them who alternately shuffled and dealt out fate to a most attentive and admiring circle.<sup>1</sup>

It is not within the memory of the writer whether it was foretold that Julia herself would become one of the leading ladies of the American stage, and Mary, one of the leading ladies in society and philanthropic work. Nor that of the boys, Millard Powers Fillmore would live to be the son of a President of the United States; that "Al" Bigelow would be an artist, poet and preacher; that "Steve" Caldwell would be one of the leading spirits among railroad and lake men, and autocrat of a vast commercial territory, assisted by his brother Seth; that "Hank" Faxon of the Faxon boys (Len and Charley) would be locally famous as editor and publisher; that "Fred," "Ed" and "Bill" of the Mayhew brothers, and the Burt boys were to be dealers-out of money by the millions; that "Al," of the Sprague boys would shortly die a sudden death, and later George

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1. It may be permissible to recall here something of that loved and lovely personality, Julia Dean, the most famous actress that Buffalo can claim as her own. She was born in 1830 in Dutchess Co., at the home of her grandfather, Samuel Drake, who reared her until she was ten. In 1840 she came to Buffalo to live with her stepfather, Edwin Dean, senior member of the firm of Dean & McKinney, managers of the Eagle street theater. Here she spent her school days, of which Mr. Mathews writes; and here she began her stage career, her first appearance being on short notice, to fill the place of an actress who was unable to appear. In 1846, being then but 16 years old, she made her New York debut at the old Bowery Theatre. For nearly a decade she played with great success. In March, 1855, she married Dr. Hayne of Charleston, S. C., son of Robert Y. Hayne. She continued to act, after her marriage, but her popularity waned. The marriage was unhappy, and a few years later she procured a divorce. Later, in New York, she married James G. Cooper. If one may judge from her portrait, and from what was said of her, more than sixty years ago, she was versatile and intelligent, and possessed of charm, rather than beauty. During one Buffalo engagement, in the fall of 1847, she played, among other parts, that of *Bianca*, in "Fasio, or the Italian Wife," *Margaret Elmore* in "Love's Sacrifice," *Mrs. Haller* in "The Stranger," *Lucretia* in "Lucretia Borgia," *Ion* in the classical tragedy of that name, and others, some of them in plays long forgotten. The local press, perhaps not discriminating in its criticism of an obvious favorite, was wont to call her "ardent," "impulsive," "dashing," and the like. A rôle in which she won high praise, at a later period, when her powers were more matured, was *Julia* in "The Hunchback." She appeared in that character with William J. Florence as *Lord Tinsel*, in a notable New York engagement in 1852.



JULIA DEAN.

BORN 1830, DIED 1868. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH IN THE POSSESSION OF THE BUFFALO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, TAKEN IN SAN FRANCISCO ABOUT 1865.



would be found dead on Grand Island from the careless handling of his gun; that the Thayer boys, Sage brothers and others were to leave their bright marks in the army and navy, and various other walks of life.

Almost contemporary with Mr. Chambers, was P. G. Cook, fondly known to a passing generation as Chaplain Cook, who was successfully conducting a select school in the then lately abandoned Benjamin Rathbun bank building on Eagle street near Main.

Along in the '40's the Public School system of the State having been reorganized and commodious school houses built for each district, and a higher grade of teachers employed in the larger towns, the select schools, of which there were several in Buffalo, seemed to fall into disfavor, many of the oldtime tutors becoming public-school teachers and the scholars becoming attendants thereof.

After the erection of the colonnaded-front school house No. 8 on Church street, with Professor Brown as principal, the disbandment of Chambers' and other select schools in the vicinity took place and later we find our respected old tutor installed as principal in the new and handsome Vine-street schoolhouse, where after years of service he retired, to again hang out his sign in the lower part of the city, this time as "Doctor Hiram Chambers."

"ONE-LEGGED HARRISON."

In the old village and young city days of Buffalo, a lost child meant to the parents a season of dread uncertainty and a heart full of misgivings which were in most cases protracted owing to the custom of taking in and caring for the waif until the appearance of the "town crier," who, at that time was a colored man by the name of James, or, "One-legged Harrison," he having lost his right leg close

up to the body. This man, with his crutch, was conceded to be one of the best all-round athletes (in his way) and certainly the best horseback rider in town, and were he around with his feats of agility in these days, would have attracted the attention of Buffalo Bill and be one of the leading attractions.

How many of the then "little tots" now living can remember when in their little beds as "snug as bugs," they were awakened from a sound sleep in the stillness of the night by the ringing of an old tavern hand-bell at the corners below, followed by the low melodious crooning of some plantation melody and a general raising of window-sash in the houses around, to hear the "announcement" which soon came from a pair of stentorian lungs, like unto this:

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes!! I have lost a little girl—three years old—with a yaller calicer dress—blue-check apron—pink sun-bonnet—red stockings and blue morocco shoes—whoever will deliver her to me shall—be—well—rewarded."

Starting up his horse on a gallop with a "go-link, go-link, go-link," of his bell that kept time with the fall of the hoof, he rode to the next corner, when there was a repetition and so on along until the lost lamb was restored to the fold.

"How in Sam Hill he manages to ride that hoss, all cluttered up in that way, I can't see," said Maj. Berry, the old tax collector, one night, as Harrison reined up his horse to the curb in front of Hargreave Lee's old store opposite the Kremlin Block, and delivered to an almost distracted family who lived overhead, one little boy, one little dog and one little drum, which together with crutch, bell and reins, on a one-stirrup saddle, accompanied old Harrison on his nag—and he was master of the situation.

He was the best singer in the old Vine-street (colored) Methodist Church, where he wooed and won his wife, a

three-quarter white frail little body. It was at his house near the canal where E. P. Christy and his boy George went occasionally to spend an evening in music and "down South talk," while they were preparing to make their debut in the minstrelsy business. Here also some of the members of the Empire Minstrels, an organization of home talent, consisting of some of our best young men, made studies from life for the purpose of going out to nearby cities for a little fun, but by good business management and high appreciation from unexpected quarters, were induced to make the tour of the principal cities of the United States—the pioneer negro minstrel company.

As an auctioneer on wheels Harrison was pre-eminent. Scorning a sitting posture his upright figure on crutch and one leg was a familiar sight as he drove around from place to place, receiving bids on the decrepit vehicles and "little off" horse-flesh, that was almost daily put in his hands to make the best of.

As a swimmer, he would have been entitled to "take the cake." One feat with one foot in treading water was when, in cuffing his wife's ears, she backed away from him and tumbled into the canal. He followed and rescued her, holding her head above water until help was at hand.

Planting his crutch on a bar-room floor he could describe a half circle of one foot over the stove-pipe hat of the tallest man in the room, and come down standing right side up (with care for the hat), to the great amazement of all, and liberal contributions of "shad scales" from the spectators.

One afternoon in May a party of gentlemen were taking it easy in the big arm chairs under the trees in front of the office of Stevenson Brothers' big yellow wooden livery stable on Pearl street in the rear of the old American Hotel, when Lieut. Hamilton of the regulars stationed at Poinsett Bar-

racks, called out to Jimmy to have that new horse saddled and he would ride out to Black Rock and see if the animal would pass inspection. After mounting with the remark, "Too many oats," the war dance began with a sawing on the bits, a bracing up in the stirrups and a general flying of heels and dirt in the air, necessitating a changing of this son of Mars' usual infantry tactics to cavalry maneuvers of high degree.

One of the proprietors, fearing a disaster, rushed up and seizing the bridle bade him to "come down and try another," supplementing the remark with, "We will have to turn him over to One-legged Harrison," who happened to be standing across the street grinning at the free circus.

Hamilton obeyed the order, and came down and out of the stirrups with alacrity. His Southern blood was fired, and sidling toward John in chanticleer fashion, demanded to know what he meant by his "insinuation, sah!"

Now, John "didn't mean anything" by his good-natured slip, but he should have borne in mind that it was part of a West Pointer's education to keep on deck of the most sprightly equine "high kicker," under all circumstances. Quite a crowd collected to "hear 'em argy." It was moved by John L. Talcott, and seconded by Eli Cook that the matter be referred to Landlord Hodges, whereupon the party went over through the back way to the American, to "see about it." There the affair was satisfactorily settled according to the old Kentucky code (old rye and lemon peel) without anybody being shot, even in the neck.

In later years Harrison became morose, and lost control of his temper. His hearty ringing guffaw was no longer heard on the streets, and the children knew him no more. "Copper John," the faithful old sentinel over the castellated walls in Auburn took him under his watchful eye where he



could enjoy the ministrations of a fellow townsman, the Rev. P. G. Cook, former principal of Cook's Academy, who had lately graduated from the Theological Seminary and received the appointment of Prison Chaplain.

"OLD BEALS."

An old-time "Jack-of-all-trades," master of the professions, manipulator of cats' paws, a power behind the throne of local squatter sovereignty and a thorn to the easy-going portion of the early business community was "Old Beals."

He came to Buffalo from Ithaca, N. Y., via Cayuga Lake and the Erie canal in the early '40's, as owner and captain of a condemned laker bought of the old-time firm of Morgans, merchants and grain shippers, at Aurora, Cayuga Co.; with the understanding that it was to be paid for in thirty days after its arrival at Buffalo. The boat never reached its place of destination, but was mysteriously sunk at Black Rock after its cargo had been disposed of, and the proceeds snug in the big calf-skin wallet of Mr. Beals.

These were the days when the word of most business men was considered as good as their bond, especially of a younger man to a confiding old gentleman who didn't want to bother mending a troublesome old goose-quill.

Prior to the middle '40's the only railroad tracks that led into Buffalo were the Buffalo and Black Rock horse railway 2½ miles long, and the Buffalo and Niagara Falls Railroad, 22 miles. The bucking facilities of the lake steamers (excepting the old United States, Capt. Whitiker, with a record of having during her career made the port of Buffalo in every month of the year), were inadequate for raising the occasional ice-blockades of the harbor, caused by protracted southwest winds packing the ice around the harbor and delaying navigation in the lower end of the

lake, many days after the opening of canal navigation, and the flow of travel from the East began pouring into Buffalo, causing the inevitable overflow of hotels, big corners in the provision markets, and jam of canal boats awaiting the arrival of in-bound lake freight.

It was during one of these seasons that Beals, having a month before heard that the ice in the bay was piled mountains high, indicating a late opening, left Ithaca on his late purchase on a calling tour at the various landings on Cayuga Lake, and soon after arrival at Cayuga Bridge with an assorted cargo of Tompkins-county russets, dried apples on the string and left-over odds and ends from the farmers' cellars. Hastily constructing a lot of coops which he filled with live poultry from the village for a deck load, and snapping on to a tow-line, he was soon on his way to the promised land.

Arriving at Black Rock Dam, his craft was boarded by "Bill" Baldy, "Hop" Young and "Spectacled" Keyes, three eminent steamboat solicitors of that day celebrated for their jolly vociferousness and buttonhole tenacity, who were prospecting for late arrivals of freight and passengers.

Baldy at once saw that here was "a chance for a speck," and forthwith with Hop and Keyes, formed a syndicate backed by "Gus" Tiffany, who personally conducted the sales in job lots to be loaded into the wagons of eager market-men and provision dealers of Buffalo.

Surprised beyond compare at the sudden dropping of his boat to the bottom of the canal the night after unloading, Beals the following morning proceeded on foot up the tow-path to finish a trip that was to add another to the list of enterprising men of Buffalo.

While passing Sandy Town he observed in a cove formed on the flats at the east side of the canal near the foot of

Court street a fleet of condemned pioneer canal boats. In forty-eight hours he was in possession of seven boats, two of them noted as being part of the flotilla that went out to meet Governor Clinton on the opening of the Erie Canal. With these and a lease of two acres of land surrounding, and subsequent additions of old craft, hauled ashore and blocked up, he founded the suburban attraction known as Bealsville, which was soon tenanted by a class of laborers who much preferred these lodgings to the squatter board shanties of Sandy Town.

His first introduction to our business men was a personal call offering twenty cents for smooth Spanish quarters taken for sixteen cents. By a heating process he restored to view the obliterated impression and realized the full value—twenty-five cents. He also cashed doubtful notes and accounts with which he had a very unpleasant way of pressing collection. Near the canal cut, off Washington street, he erected a high board fence around a dilapidated warehouse, and building up lean-to sheds he opened up a second-hand lumber yard and sort of museum and sales rooms for old doors, sash, blinds, mantels and the like from dismantled buildings falling under the march of improvement. As a speculator in damaged edibles and other calamity holdings he knew just when and where to strike.

Old-timers of the '40's will remember seeing and smelling on the corner of North Division street, opposite "the churches," the smoke and fumes of roasting peas and divers cereals, rolling out from the doors and windows of an establishment on which was the sign, "T. Foster, pure ground coffee and spice mills." One day a canal boat loaded mostly with coffee and sugars consigned to A. D. A. Miller and Geo. B. Walbridge, collided with a stone boat and sunk off the shore of the "Five Points." Beals bought

the coffee and in a few days the air in the neighborhood of his establishment rivaled Foster's in fragrance, it being the aroma from genuine Rio, Java and Maracaibo, which was being roasted, ground, and packed in half-pound packages and labeled "Buffalo Pure Ground Coffee," to be sold in Cleveland.

The last trip down the lake for boats to lay up for the winter often brought mutton carcasses, dressed hogs, Ohio walnuts, etc. The propeller Princeton, after being storm-bound at Fairport during a warm, muggy spell in early December, arrived with 250 dressed hogs that presented a sorry sight with their flesh of greenish hue, and fast acquiring an oriental fragrance. Fifteen minutes after the boat tied up Beals had the lot at one dollar a hog, and fifteen minutes later took one hundred dollars for his bargain from a lard-oil refiner whom he had forestalled.

During the summer months many a full cream Hamburg cheese in handling for shipment would be found cracked, with skippers threatening to skip out with the internal arrangements. These Beals would buy and break up into butter firkins, stirring in rectified corn whiskey (then bought at sixteen cents a gallon by the barrel) and allowed to ferment and settle down to come out a prime article of old brandy cheese, commanding good prices in the New York market.

He was a surprise party on more than one occasion to persons with houses built with windows on the line and liable to be darkened by building against. Dumping a load or two of lumber in front of adjoining premises he had rented, preliminary to erecting a shed-like structure, negotiations would be at once opened for "buying him off."

As a curb-stone broker he was much sought after for small loans on "jack-knife and bull's-eye" collateral, even

to the taking of chattel mortgages on false teeth on gold plates; one loan of twenty dollars on a full set causing him much grief by the burning of the ill-fated steamboat Erie off Silver Creek, August 9, 1841, by which awful calamity nearly 300 lives were lost—and the teeth!

On the memorable night of October 18, 1844, after a series of southeast gales lasting a week which had lowered the water in the harbor over two feet and laid bare the beach further out than the oldest inhabitant could remember, the wind, just before twelve, suddenly changed into the northwest, blowing a hurricane, changing a balmy moonlight night into a dark aerial pandemonium. Without a moment's warning a wall of water like a huge tidal wave came down the lake and entered the harbor by leaping over the pier and across the island, lifting the shipping bodily from their moorings and banging them against the docks and warehouses amid fearful howlings and crashings. On went the tide until canal, streets, lumber yards, and nearly everything on the flats east, south, and west of the city were under one body of water.

Most remarkable were the changes of base that appeared after the waters had receded. Boats that had no buildings to keep them within bounds "got up and left across lots." The steamboat Columbus, a 600-tonner, lay high and dry in Ohio street, near Wilson's coal yard. The steamer Chautauqua was caught by the big wave ten miles out and set down, right side up, in Sandy Town in among the brush heaps and sand hills. Bealsville had gone off, and on its site were spread out the scattered cargoes of two lumber-laden schooners. That ended the utilization of canal boats for residential purposes, so far as Beals was concerned. He soon sickened, closed up his affairs, and died, 1850.

## SOME BUFFALO BELLS.

There are bells in Buffalo that, for the historic interest they possess, and others for their rich mellowness of tone, are worth their weight in gold. Go and ascertain the taking price of that venerable little 1,000-pounder that hangs in the minor tower of the Church-street side of St. Paul's. This bell that so long tolled forth from the belfry of the four-pinnacled tower of the quaint little blue church of St. Paul's on the spot called "The Churches," was the first church bell that tolled the hour of worship to the old-time Buffalonians; and in deference to the wishes of the late Rev. Dr. William Shelton of much revered memory, who filled a rectorship of over a half-century in St. Paul's parish, the old bell, after it was decided to have chimes in the main tower, was retained that he might hear its old familiar tone as it rang out from the smaller belfry as the "Sunday-school bell."<sup>1</sup>

Before the beginning of the War of 1812 and the subsequent burning of Buffalo by the British, the village had no church building, and according to this story, as related by Mrs. St. John to the writer, "Buffalo never had a church nor a bell. The men folks were all too busy to think of religion, and us women folks all went to meetin' in the old Court-house."

Prior to the early '20's, and during the first decade of rebuilding the burned village, several religious societies were organized and held services in the spacious new Court-house, erected in 1816, the old bell of which, now in possession of the Buffalo Historical Society, was virtually the primitive "Sabbath bell" of Buffalo. After the erection of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in 1819, the first of the churches

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1. In recent years it has been rung for communion on Thursdays and Holy Days.

to be finished with a steeple, a subscription paper for a bell was started one morning along the docks and up Main street. Before night the paper, headed with "John Lay, \$5.00," and ended with a \$10 bill from the big calfskin wallet of that most Catholic of French Catholics, Louis Le Couteulx, insured to the Episcopalians the first church bell of Buffalo.

Subsequently and in part contemporary with St. Paul's, two miles away to the north, in the belfry of the Breckenridge-street Presbyterian Church, in the rival village of Black Rock, hung a 500-pound bell that has for over 60 years called the people to worship. Among whom, along in the '50's, might occasionally have been seen, book in hand, wending his way along with his "Auntie Allen" to church, a then unthought of, but later much talked of, President of the United States.

This bell, by virtue of annexation, became brevet senior church bell of Buffalo.

To the sad ending of the career of this Buffalo bell, there hangs a tale. After the sale of the old church property in 1890, preparatory to building on a new site, the bell was stored in an out-house on the premises of the Hon. Lewis F. Allen. One night, after Mr. Allen's death, thieves broke in and stole the bell, which, although search was made, has never been found.<sup>1</sup>

The second bell to entrench itself in the affections of the Buffalo villagers was the "town-clock bell," a 2,500-pounder of clear sonorous tone that tolled off the hours, and rang out the "7," "12" and "9-o'clock bell" from the tower of the elegant brick First Presbyterian Church edifice that had just been completed (1827), and thereafter stood with the stately mien of a grandfather's clock for two decades along-

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1. Nor is its whereabouts known to this day.

side the "little blue church," and afterwards the new St. Paul's until the '90's.

One Fourth of July in the early '40's, Sexton John Newland and assistant, in dancing around the vestibule with a big rope in their hands while ringing the sweet jubilee bell, developed a fracture, which, after much boring, sawing and filing, resulted only in producing hoarser and more disagreeable tones, necessitating the removal of the bell for re-casting. Its successor proved to be nearly of the same tone as the original and faithfully performed its duty until the removal uptown to more sumptuous and retired quarters.

The third and last to make its debut as a "village bell," was an 1,800-pounder introduced by the Universalists in the early '30's for their big wooden church around the corner on Washington between South Division and Swan streets. This bell was the firemen's favorite and was called by them "the rattler." In the '60's, after a removal to the new brick Church of the Messiah, on Main, above Huron street, the church-bell and all were destroyed by fire.

Along in the middle '30's, Buffalo having become a city, the Baptists, after leaving their pretty little white-spired bell-less church on the corner of Washington and Seneca streets for the new "big brick" on Washington, above Swan street, introduced a 2,600-pounder, the first of the "city bells." After being duly installed in the huge, square, flat-top, unsightly belfry for about a year, Old Boreas in a big blowout one night gave vent to his distaste for the big two-story box steeple, by giving it a series of twists that necessitated a "coming down and out" for remodeling. After a delay of two or more years, the bell was replaced under cover of a more church-like looking steeple, where within a year it revealed a cracked voice. After a re-cast, the new



bell was placed in position for elevation and when about half way up suddenly became the principal actor in a grand "stand from under" matinee, cutting its way "clean down to the sullen bottom," 'as the old sexton expressed it, "right side up with care" and no bones broken. Another trial was more successful, and for a series of years this bell, with that of the Universalist, St. Paul's and the old First Church, all near each other, furnished all the bell-ringing within the radius of a mile that was necessary.

In 1842, the first Lutheran bell of Buffalo, a 1,400-pounder, was put in the big square tight-blind belfry of the First Lutheran Church (of good old Pastor Guenther's memory) that had been erected away over on Hickory street, five years before. This bell was rung in the style of the "Fatherland," but as it was "sound-smothered," and so far away, never became a disturbing factor.

Along in the summer evenings of 1845 the melodious sound of a vesper bell came stealing over the plain from the belfry of a long, low, one-story brick church building, from where now rise the walls and spires of the cathedral-like edifice of St. Mary's German Catholic Church on Broadway and Pine street. This was the first Catholic bell of Buffalo, and was a pleasing innovation to many, as its early-morning calls were in tones that turned many a morning nap into a dream-like slumber. In 1846 was placed on one of the rear, unfinished brick towers of St. Louis' German and French Catholic Church on Main street, a 3,000-pound "slumber-breaker," that soon created a difference of opinion as to the merits of early-morning bell-ringing.

The second Catholic bell, the early-morning "slumber-breaker" of St. Louis' Church, after a clamorous career of four decades, was destroyed by fire at the burning of the church during the '80's.

Many of the old-time residents of Buffalo during the decade between '40 and '50, can easily recall to mind a big wooden sign-board that for years extended from building to curb, in front of a three-story brick, adjoining the Buffalo Engine Works on Ohio street, bearing the legend, "Adam Good, Brass and Bell Founder," the reading of which by the young irrepressibles who chanced to pass by was often with a vigorous, loud-toned, hyphenized Adam, which was not at all aggravating to Adam, for he knew that it was fast becoming a profitable trade-mark in the manufacture of honest tin and copper bell metal for bells of lightweight, for which he was becoming celebrated. In 1846, during the building of the new North Presbyterian Church on Main street, local pride and a desire to patronize home industry prompted Jason Sexton, of the building committee, to tender to Mr. Good the contract for a 3,000-pounder. Now, Adam's reputation lay mostly in his 1,000-pound church bells, for which he had many orders and ran as a specialty. Not having the facilities for these big jobs, he declined, but after much persuasion he concluded to try his hand. After three trials, the results not proving of satisfactory tone to himself, he sent the order to Medway, Mass., which was duly filled with a bell of deep, heavy tone, which was known thereafter as the "growler."

Sunday "stop-overs" in some of our older Western towns are often struck with the peculiar mellow sound of a church bell. Should they take the pains to visit the belfry, they would find a 1,000-pounder bearing an old-time Buffalo birth-mark, and other indisputable evidence of the handiwork of "Adam Good, Brass and Bell Founder."

#### NEW YEAR'S IN THE '40'S.

"Lower the goosenecks," was the order that passed along the long line of horse stalls to the floor above, where had

been summered most everything on runners from the brilliant colored swell-bodied single gooseneck cutter, the big two-horse pleasure sleigh with elevated driver's seat, flanked by a pair of graceful golden wings that hugged the sides, with tips nearly astern of the craft, piled in with a wealth of big buffalo, wolf and bearskin robes, to the gorgeous four- or six-in-hand gondola-like turn-out in the big yellow livery stable of Stevenson Brothers on Pearl street, the night before New Year's of 1842; for it was expected that on the morrow it would be a day of high carnival promised by the gentle and even piling up of the falling snow without.

Those were the days when the fashion of making "New Year's calls" was at its height, and almost everybody kept "open house." Days before, the order books of the then leading concoctors of sweets, McArthur, and Van Kleek, were "tell tales" of where there was likely to be a spread of macaroons, meringues, silver, gold and fruit cake and the old-time gothic-shaped New Year's cakes that the old folks liked so well to hand out to the little ones who "went around a-wishing" and who at some homes were the most welcome of all guests.

Old Niagara Square was then the social hub and the center of attraction for callers on foot, or in sleighs of many kinds, causing the air to resound with the merry tea-bell tinkling of the tiny thill bell, and the more pleasing rattling melody of the ponderous fifteen-pound bellyband and ten-pound collar strings of old-time New England sleigh bells, that jingled to the gliding of "grandfather's high back," nearly the livelong day and well along into the evening shades.

Over on the west side of the square in the old colonial style house of the Wilkesons, the venerable Judge was "at

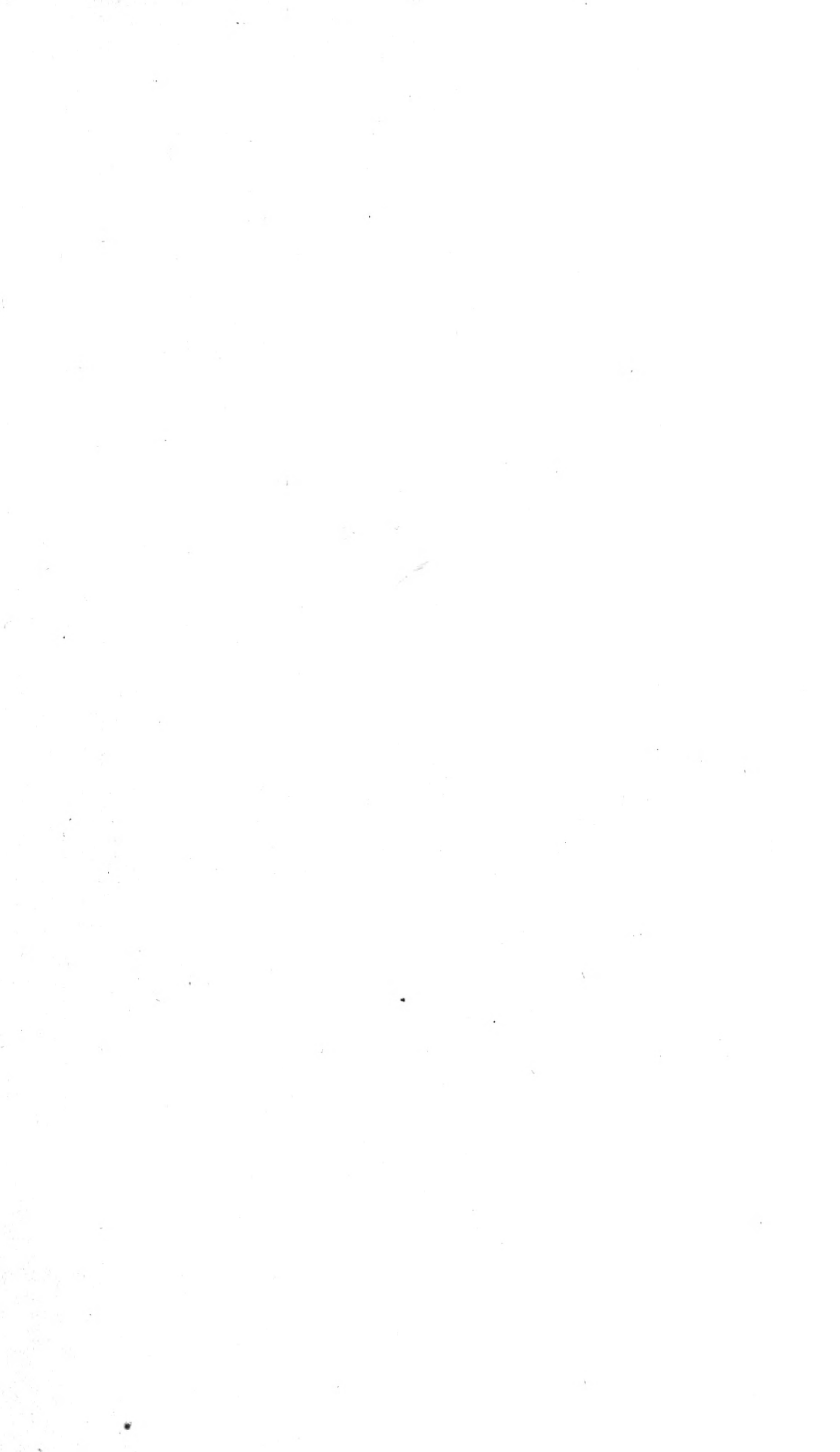
home." South side, the pretty landscape-and-medallion painted shades were rolled up in the parlors of Hon. Geo. R. Babcock; while on the opposite corner the gorgeous window laces of Lawyer Seth G. Austen were looped up. Across the square on the east side, the big green blinds of the Court street front of Gen. David Burt's house (now a part and parcel of the old Central High School) were non-obstructors of light. On the north side the castellated residence of Gen. George P. Barker (afterwards the Holliston-Fillmore mansion) had an inviting look with its silver latchstring hung out, emblematic of "welcome," and its neighbor, the handsome home of Col. Henry H. Sizer, withstood more than one charge of a storming party up its high stone steps.

Like most old time-honored customs abuses crept in. While it was pleasing to hear the "returns come in" from where they kept the lists of calls and number, the tired and almost distracted fair entertainer and her bevy "to assist" did not deem it incumbent upon themselves to "receive" military, fire, and target companies and societies in a body where "things get mixed" and promiscuousness prevailed, oftentimes necessitating a mid-winter's house-cleaning and an extra bill for crippled furniture repairs.

Another decade later finds the beautiful custom fast falling into disrepute, except among the families of genuine Knickerbockers, who well know how to preserve it in all its pristine glory.













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